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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 001414

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [BA](#) [REGION](#) [POL](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF LEBANON INCREASE

REF: MANAMA 1391

Classified By: CDA Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (U) King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa reiterated July 31 his call for an immediate cease-fire and reaffirmed Bahrain's support for the Lebanese government and the Lebanese people. Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa issued a similar statement August 1. Demonstrations and fund-raising activities are ongoing with tacit approval of the GOB. Media commentary is increasingly critical of Arab governments' inaction. End summary.

¶2. (U) Reaffirming his call for an immediate cease-fire, King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa issued a statement of support for the Lebanese government and the Lebanese people on July 31. He said that Lebanon must retain its sovereignty over all its land, and peace and stability must be restored. He also stressed the need for a diplomatic solution to the dispute. Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa repeated his support August 1 for Lebanon and called for a cease-fire to protect the lives of innocent civilians.

¶3. (C) Bahrainis in general continue to voice their support for Lebanon and for Hizballah's resistance to Israeli military action. The August 2-4 Lebanon "festival" (reftel), entitled "I'm at your service, oh resistance," has been publicized prominently. Banners, billboards, and newspaper advertisements, depicting an armed fighter running into battle on a background of Lebanese and Hizballah flags, have become more visible throughout the week. Relatively young Shia cleric and Al Wifaq member Mohamed Al Ghuraifi, reportedly in charge of the event, stressed that the festival is intended for all segments of Bahraini society, including expatriates, not just for Shia or for members of Al Wifaq.

To Demonstrate, Or Not

¶4. (U) Chat room Multaqa Al Bahrain (Bahrain Online) announced that the Interior Ministry had denied a request to demonstrate August 3 submitted by residents of Sanabis village. The reason given for the denial was the 7:00 p.m. post-sunset start time, since according to Bahrain's law of assembly, demonstrations are not permitted before sunrise or after sunset. Sanabis is near the commercial Seef area where popular shopping malls and the International Exhibition Center are located.

¶5. (C) The drumbeat of criticism condemning inactive Arab regimes continues to be audible, as well as criticism of the

U.S. and the U.K. Akhbar Al Khaleej columnists Hafed Al Shaikh and Mohamed Al Shehabi similarly wrote August 2 that "illegitimate, traitorous Arab regimes" will be overthrown by their people eventually as a result of their silence about the "massacres by the Zionist Enemy in Lebanon." (Note: This anti-Arab government statement is more commonly heard among the public here and there are indications from chat rooms that an as yet unconfirmed march on the Saudi Embassy may take place Friday, August 4. There have also been rumors of a protest at the British Embassy this weekend. Both embassies face more of a security challenge than the U.S. Embassy due to their location in congested areas of downtown Manama. End note.) Calls for demonstrations at the U.S. Embassy continue to be seen in chat rooms, but indications are that some political activists and Shia clerics are against the suggestion, not wanting to antagonize GOB authorities.

BCCI Suggests Charity Concert

¶6. (U) Bahrain Television and Radio Corporation management rejected a request by its staff for a live television broadcast to express solidarity with the Lebanese people and the Lebanese resistance. However, GOB-supported Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has received approval to hold a charity concert August 7 at the Gulf Hotel International Convention Center. BCCI Committee to Support the Lebanese People chairman and prominent Shia businessman Jawad Al Hawaj praised the Ministry of Information for its quick approval to broadcast the event live on Bahrain TV.

Comment

¶7. (C) The efforts to support the Lebanese people and Hizballah continue unabated and have become more varied and creative, yet remain to date controlled. There is some indication that leading political societies, such as Al Wifaq, are concerned that if things get out of hand, the GOB may use the unrest as an excuse to tighten control in the lead-up to this fall's parliamentary and municipal elections. Political societies, civil society groups, business groups, and grassroots village movements have all joined in to raise financial support for Lebanon. Although neither the Palace nor the GOB have yet announced any direct financial aid to Lebanon, their tacit approval, if not open encouragement, of Bahraini citizens' efforts is clear.

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